

*lit. hist. v. 6.*

A

L E T T E R

FROM

MONSIEUR DESENFANS

TO

MRS. MONTAGU.

TRANSLATED

BY MRS. GRIFFITH.



L O N D O N ;

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MCCCLXXVII

T H E  
T R A N S L A T O R  
T O T H E  
R E A D E R.

**T**H E names of those illustrious Personages who are the subjects of the following pages, tempted me to consider the Pamphlet as of some consequence to the literary world, and induced me to take the trouble of translating it. No one can possibly have an higher respect for the Lady to whom the letter is addressed, or a greater veneration for the character and writings of Monsieur de Fenelon, than I have; and as a natural consequence of an esteem so equally well placed, both on the living and the dead, I think I may freely confess a sovereign contempt and abhorrence for many of the precepts and passages contained in Lord Chesterfield's Letters; and both these sentiments will, I doubt

doubt not, occur together to every honest mind, upon considering the article here in question.

IN some parts of the following little work I have taken the liberty of extending and illustrating Monsieur Defenfans ideas, which indeed could not well be avoided, when they were to appear in a language more diffusive than the French. How far I have succeeded in my wish of rendering them explicit to the English Reader, is submitted to the candour of the Public.



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# LETTER

TO

MRS. MONTAGU.

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MADAM,

**Y**OUR defence of Shakespeare, the great support and brightest ornament of the English Theatre, does honour to the present century. Your love of truth, that noblest characteristic of a great mind, joined to your exquisite discernment, and the powerful and elegant language you have shewn yourself mistress of in that work, have not only done justice to your Author, but also acquired you

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a distinguished name among the Literati; which there is no doubt will be equally respected by posterity, as by the present times.

BUT is it to be supposed, Madam, that you engaged in the honourable cause of this superior genius, merely because he was your countryman? No, surely;—it was in order to vindicate merit, which is the true compatriot of the wise, and dear to all the good; which claims the world as its birthright, and where-ever found, is acknowledged as a fellow-citizen by the too narrow circle of the liberal and the learned.

THIS sentiment, which renders you superior to national prejudices, is the source of my present confidence in you; as I consider it as a kind of warrant, that your candour will not condemn me for the ardent desire I feel to efface a stain which an Englishman has lately thrown upon the fame of one of our authors, who was

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as justly respectable for his uncommon virtues, as celebrated for his genius and erudition.

YOU, Madam, have shewn too much spirit in the defence of your immortal Shakespeare, to disapprove of this just tribute to the adored memory of our immortal Fenelon. If one is the delight and boast of your country, the other is the enlightened guide even of our monarchs, as well as the glory of our nation.

WE are but too well acquainted with the common fate of those men who possess superior talents: discouragement and neglect are not always the only harvest they reap in return for the pains they have taken for our advantage; it often happens that the sole reward they receive from the fruits of their genius, is the being set up as a mark for the poisoned arrows of malignity to aim at; and those who ought only to look up to them with the highest respect, from a consciousness

of their own inferiority, are generally the first to cabal against, and plot their ruin. This swarm of venomous insects, obstinately bent on the destruction of merit, rise and buzz forth the piercing sounds of calumny and prejudice. The envious, the knave, the fool, the blockhead, nay sometimes even the learned themselves, join the persecution, and render what should be the object of their admiration, the subject of contempt and ridicule.

SUCH, Madam, is too frequently the lot of those eminent men whom Heaven in its bounty bestows on us; and I consider the scarcity of great geniuses as a punishment for our ingratitude towards them; as the privation of such bright luminaries must necessarily involve the mental world in the obscurity of ignorance and vice, as certainly as the absence of the sun is succeeded by darkness, in the physical one.

WE all boast our attachment to merit, and affect being inclined to aid and support it.



it. But alas! it is against their will that the generality of men pay it homage; for even at the instant when they praise and exalt it, and even scatter a little incense on its altar, they long to pull down the idol, and place it on a level with themselves.——Thus some men seem to open their arms, and offer an asylum to the Poet or the Philosopher, who at the same time wish he had expired in his cradle; whilst others, in order to give themselves consequence, and rise above the vulgar, will protect him one day, and abuse him the next, if the tide of fashionable popularity should turn against him. A great man, like a curious animal brought from a distant country, is the mode but for a little time. The first day it is an elephant, a rhinoceros, and you must run the hazard of your life or limbs, by pressing through the croud to see it: by the third day, it dwindles into an ant, is forgotten, or becomes the subject of satire or contempt to the millions whom curiosity

sity and the frivolous passion for novelty had rendered loudest in its praise.

Is then, Madam, our boasted love of merit sincere? Yes, we all love it; but we love it only in ourselves.—Self-love, the ruling passion of most minds, holds the reins of the heart, and by suffering it to admit the mean vice of envy, renders us capable even of hating it in others; and that of the Poet whose cause you have espoused, was by much too striking not to call forth the jealousy of his inferiors, and the satire of those who vainly wished to equal it.

BUT Monsieur de Voltaire, in his strictures upon Shakespear, has only attacked him as an Author, and has respected the amiableness of his character as a man. The cause of my present complaint is of another nature; the integrity of Monsieur de Fenelon's private character is attacked; he is robbed of the sacred inheritance of his honour, a treasure which every virtu-

ous man has a right to claim from posterity, after his decease: 'tis, as your Shakspeare says, the "immediate jewel of the soul," for which not all the laurel wreaths the Muses can bestow, can compensate. To the dead, indeed, it is of little consequence, whether their writings are admired or despised; but dead or living, it is of the highest importance that a good man's reputation should remain unblemished.

WHEN Lord Chesterfield's Letters were first published, they were announced to me as designed for a plan of education; as such I considered them, at the first reading, and slightly passed over all those passages which did not appear analogous to that particular purpose. A few days ago I took them up again, in order to read those I had formerly neglected; but my astonishment is not to be expressed, when, on perusing the cclxi<sup>st</sup>. letter, I found his Lordship inhumanly degrading the memory of the wise and virtuous Fenelon; and,

and, in consequence of a letter in the collection of those that were published under the name of Madame de Maintenon, wantonly charging the Archbishop of Cambray with having advised that lady to prostitute herself to Lewis XIV !

I ALWAYS knew that the illustrious Author of *Telemachus* had many enemies; but I also knew that those very enemies, who most warmly opposed the errors they imputed to his opinions, were compelled to respect his morals. I could not imagine how such a black and infamous slander, which must have originated in the bosom of a Court, had happened to escape the watchfulness and malignity of his persecutors, the Courtiers of Lewis the Fourteenth, who, like those of all other Monarchs, have lynxes eyes to discover the failings of the man they wish to ruin,

BUT, Madam, is it probable that he, who could paint Virtue in so amiable a light, should be so insensible to her charms,



charms, as to debase her to the vilest purposes? Or, can we believe that man, who was universally esteemed by his cotemporaries, even by those who envied him, was in reality a monster who deserved to be torn to pieces, merely because it has pleased Lord Chesterfield to give an unfair and equivocal meaning to certain expressions?—Doubtless, no; and whatever deference may be due to his Lordship's authority, I shall never submit to adopt an opinion so contrary even to probability. Besides, the slightness of his Lordship's judgment upon other subjects, has taught me to consider him rather in the light of a wasp that stings and teases you, than in that of the wise and industrious bee, which collects its treasures from every proper object, rejecting all that tends to injure or disgust, and provides for man a perfect hoard of sweets.

THE perusal of Monsieur de Fenelon's Letter, which Lord Chesterfield made a subject for the most virulent abuse, soon

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convinced

convinced me, that though his Lordship might have had Lord Bolingbroke's works by heart, he by no means understood those of Moses. And though, from his long and attentive study of the *Graces*, he might be perfectly capable of judging who bowed or danced best at a ball, I will venture to say it required a more enlightened and comprehensive understanding than his, to pronounce decisively on the letter in question.

I COULD not, however, help lamenting, that such a dishonourable blemish should be stamped on the memory of the virtuous Fenelon, by the rash hand of a nobleman who was distinguished by a fund of literary knowledge, and whose character for politics and politeness, so generally allowed him, may perhaps convey his writings to posterity, and with them the notorious slander he has forged against the good Archbishop. We all know that the progress of calumny is accelerated by elegant writing: when we are pleased with the  
manner,

manner, the matter gains easy admittance to the heart, and too oft, I fear, finds a secret advocate there, in our own self-love.

How melancholy a reflection, how humiliating for mankind, to think that such dangerous men should be possessed of talents, which may give them the power of misleading our opinions, of becoming, as it were, the arbiters of fame, and imposing on the credulity of a people whom they plunge in falsehood and error, while they pretend to be the Oracles of Truth!

Too often these impostors, swelled with insolence and pride, see no other foundation for the characters they stamp on others, than their own passions; they paint from their particular feelings, and deny even the existence of any virtue of which they are themselves incapable. Their want of judgment is frequently conspicuous in  
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their bestowing praise and censure so indiscriminately, as to disfigure and disguise the object they pretend to place in a clear view, while their profane lips breathe forth the spirit of confusion and prejudice into the minds of the multitude. From hence so many partial Historians, from hence so many pedants and sophists have passed upon the world as emulators of the wise and virtuous Socrates. From hence the civic wreath has adorned the betrayer of his country; and the laurel crown, the reward of virtue and of valour, has been consecrated to the public robbers and destroyers of mankind, enregistered in the rolls of heroic fame.

This reflection may be thought severe, and deemed a discouragement to virtue; but when caprice, iniquity, and ignorance, render the pains we take for honest fame abortive, let it console us, that our real merits are registered before the Immortal Throne on tablets as durable



as earthly records are fragile; and that the Almighty beholds the works of men, our vain annals, our satires, our eulogiums, our pompous writings, our traditions, all but our efforts to become more virtuous, swallowed up together in the vast gulph of a boundless eternity. But I intreat your pardon, Madam, for wandering from my subject, and shall now reassume it.

I WAS immediately convinced that there was as much malice and spirit of ridicule, as ignorance, in the turn that Lord Chesterfield took pains to give to M. Fenelon's letter; and though I am certain that you are not unacquainted with it, I think it necessary to lay it at present before you. It is the CLXXXVth in the Memoirs of Madame de Maintenon, to whom it is addressed.

"Your zeal for the King's salvation  
ought not to make you pass those  
bounds

“ bounds which Providence seems to have  
 “ prescribed to you; we must wait the  
 “ Almighty’s time. The true method  
 “ of inspiring his Majesty with heavenly  
 “ grace, is not to fatigue him with ex-  
 “ hortations, but to edify him, to gain  
 “ an entrance into his heart by degrees,  
 “ and by the patience and gentleness of  
 “ your conduct.

“ Your endeavours to touch his heart,  
 “ to open his eyes, and to warn him  
 “ against certain snares, to give him the  
 “ counsels of peace and moderation, of  
 “ compassion for his people, and love  
 “ for the Church, as well as your zeal to  
 “ find out proper Directors for his con-  
 “ science, require great attention and  
 “ much prudence.

“ You are the Centinel of God, in  
 “ the midst of Israel. Love the King,  
 “ and be obedient to him, as Sarah was  
 “ to Abraham. Respect him from the  
 “ bottom

“ bottom of your heart, and look upon  
 “ him as your Lord, by the immediate  
 “ order of Providence.

“ IT is true, Madam, that your situa-  
 “ tion is enigmatical ; but it is God who  
 “ has ordained it should be so. You nei-  
 “ ther desired nor chose it, nor even  
 “ conceived an idea of it yourself; it is  
 “ the work of God : he hides his secrets  
 “ from you, and from the world also,  
 “ which would be much amazed if you  
 “ should reveal to it, what you have done  
 “ in confidence to me. It is God’s mys-  
 “ tery, who has been pleased to exalt  
 “ you for the sanctification of those who  
 “ were born in the highest state of  
 “ elevation. You fill the place of a  
 “ Queen, and yet have no more privilege  
 “ nor authority than the meanest sub-  
 “ ject.”

AND now, Madam, please to observe  
 the comment which his Lordship makes  
 “ upon

upon this letter, in the cclixth of his, addressed to his Son \*.

“ My dear Friend,

“ SINCE my last to you, I have read  
 “ Madame Maintenon’s letters; and am  
 “ sure they are genuine; and they both  
 “ entertained and informed me. They  
 “ have brought me acquainted with the  
 “ character of that able and artful lady;  
 “ whom, I am convinced, that I now  
 “ know, much better than her *directeur*,  
 “ the

\* I think it proper to give Monsieur Desenfans’ translation of Lord Chesterfield’s letter, to shew that he has not altered the original.

Mon Cher Ami,

Depuis ma dernière, j’ai lu les lettres de Madame de Maintenon, & suis assuré qu’elles sont originales. Non-seulement elles m’ont amusé, mais aussi elles m’ont instruit; je leur dois sur-tout de pouvoir apprécier cette femme habile & artificieuse, qu’à n’en pas douter, je connois à présent beaucoup mieux que ne la connoissoit son directeur M. L’Abbé de Fénélon, (ensuite archevêque de Cambrai) lorsqu’il lui écrivit la cent quatre vingt cinquième lettre; & cette lettre me le fit aussi connoître lui-même plus à fonds. Le zélé abbé quoique rempli à l’excès de l’amour divin, aspirait à devenir premier ministre & cardinal; afin

*sans*



“ the *Abbé* de Fenelon (afterwards Arch-  
 “ bishop of Cambray) did, when he  
 “ wrote her the CLXXXVth letter; and I  
 “ know him the better too for that letter.  
 “ The *Abbé*, though brimful of the di-  
 “ vine love, had a great mind to be First  
 “ Minister and Cardinal, in order, *no*  
 D “ *doubt*,

*sans doute* de pouvoir rendre les plus grands services. Il  
 étoit alors directeur de Madame de Maintenon; & cette  
 qualité sembloit favoriser ses vûes. Elle joua auprès de  
 lui le rôle d'une sainte; & il fut assez idiot que de la croire  
 telle. De son côté, il desiroit aussi qu'elle ne vît en lui  
 qu'un saint homme, mais je puis assurer qu'elle ne fut pas  
 sa dupe. Cependant tous deux savoient qu'il étoit de leur  
 intérêt de paroître tels aux yeux de Louis XIV. qu'ils con-  
 noissoient pour un parfait bigot.

Il est à présumer, & en vérité il est évident par la let-  
 tre cent quatre vingt-cinquième, que Madame de Mainte-  
 non avoit fait paroître à son directeur une délicatesse de  
 conscience sur son commerce avec le roi, & lui avoit mar-  
 qué quelques scrupules que j'appellerai scrupules de pru-  
 dence, afin de flatter l'humeur dévote du monarque, &  
 d'enflammer ses desirs.

Le pieux abbé hors de lui-même, effrayé que sa majesté  
 n'attribuât au directeur, les scrupules & les obstacles que  
 la pénitence opposeroit à sa passion, lui écrivit la susdite  
 lettre, par laquelle il lui recommanda de ne pas tourmenter  
 le roi à force de conseils & d'exhortations, mais de se sou-  
 mettre entièrement à sa volonté; & afin de ne lui laisser  
 aucun doute sur la sorte de soumission dont il parloit, il lui  
 dit

“ *doubt*, to have the opportunity of doing  
 “ the more good. His being *directeur* at  
 “ that time to Madame Maintenon, seemed  
 “ to be a good step towards those views.  
 “ She puts herself upon him for a Saint,  
 “ and he was weak enough to believe it :  
 “ he, on the other hand, would have put  
 “ himself upon her for a Saint too, which,  
 “ I dare say, she did not believe; but  
 “ both of them knew, that it was neces-  
 “ sary for them to appear Saints to Lewis  
 “ the

dit que c'est la meme que Sara avoit pour Abraham ; sou-  
 mission à laquelle il est probable qu'Isaac dut le jour.  
 Non : il n'y a pas de débaucheuse qui auroit pu suborner  
 une innocente payfanne par une lettre plus séduisante.

Que ceux qui voudroient justifier ce bon directeur, au-  
 trement dit ce débaucheur, ne s'y autorisent pas en allé-  
 guant que le roi & Madame de Maintenon étoient mariés  
 secrettement ; que Mr. de Fénélon le savoit, & que voilà  
 la clef de l'enigme. Cela est absolument impossible, car  
 un mariage secret auroit étouffé toute espece de scrupule ;  
 & même il ne pouvoit avoir eu lieu que pour cela, puis-  
 qu'étant tenu secret il n'empêchoit pas le scandal public.  
 Par consequent il est clair comme le jour, que Madame de  
 Maintenon ne pouvoit pas être l'épouse du roi lorsque ses  
 scrupules la faisoient hésiter à se livrer à lui, & lorsque le  
 directeur lui conseilloit d'accorder à sa majesté, les memes  
 faveurs que Sara avoit accordées à Abraham avec tant de  
 soumission. Ainsi ce qu'il appelle le *mystere de Dieu*,  
 n'étoit absolument qu'un concubinage, &c.

“ the XIVth who they knew to be a  
 “ bigot. It is to be presumed, nay, in-  
 “ deed, it is plain by that CLXXXvth letter,  
 “ that Madame Maintenon had hinted to  
 “ her *directeur* some scruples of consci-  
 “ ence, with relation to her commerce  
 “ with the King; and which I humbly  
 “ apprehend to have been only some  
 “ scruples of prudence, at once to flatter  
 “ the bigot character, and increase the de-  
 “ sires of the King. The pious *Abbé*,  
 “ frightened out of his wits, lest the  
 “ King should impute to the *directeur* any  
 “ scruples or difficulties which he might  
 “ meet with on the part of the lady,  
 “ writes her the above-mentioned letter;  
 “ in which he not only bids her not teaze  
 “ the King by advice and exhortations,  
 “ but to have the utmost submission to  
 “ his will; and, that she may not mistake  
 “ the nature of that submission, he tells  
 “ her, it is the same that Sarah had for  
 “ Abraham; to which submission Isaac  
 “ perhaps was owing. No bawd could  
 “ have written a more seducing letter to

“ an innocent country girl, than the *di-*  
 “ *recteur* did to his *penitente*; who, I  
 “ dare say, had no occasion for his good  
 “ advice. Those who would justify the  
 “ good *directeur*, alias the pimp, in this  
 “ affair, must not attempt to do it by  
 “ saying, that the King and Madame  
 “ Maintenon were at that time privately  
 “ married; that the *directeur* knew it;  
 “ and that this was the meaning of his  
 “ *enigme*. That is absolutely impossible;  
 “ for that private marriage must have re-  
 “ moved all scruples between the par-  
 “ ties; nay, could not have been con-  
 “ tracted upon any other principle, since  
 “ it was kept private, and consequently  
 “ prevented no public scandal. It is  
 “ therefore extremely evident, that Ma-  
 “ dame Maintenon could not be married  
 “ to the King at the time when she scrupled  
 “ granting, and when the *directeur*  
 “ advised her to grant, those favours  
 “ which Sarah with so much submission  
 “ granted to Abraham: and what the *di-*  
 “ *recteur* is pleased to call *le mystere de*  
 “ *Dieu*,



“ *Dieu*, was most evidently a state of concubinage.”

You understand him, Madam! and you will allow that the air of authority, and the decisive tone which his Lordship assumes, seems almost to have sufficient weight to make us lean to his opinion, and adopt his prejudices. With like art a handful of straw may be formed into a phantom capable of striking terror into weak or unguarded minds.

I CANNOT conceive by what passage of Monsieur de Fenelon's Letter, Lord Chesterfield discovered that Madame de Maintenon had scruples; and ought he not to have been so scrupulous himself at least, as to have taken it in the plain natural sense it offers to every unprejudiced reader? Why, also, does he talk of *favours*? Had he been then soliciting those of Madame de \*\*\*\*\*, and could not therefore, at that moment, think of any other subject? And how long

long since has it been understood, that recommending it to a Wife to be submissive to her husband, was a means of debauching her? Did he advise his son to make use of this mode of expression, when he encouraged him to corrupt the chastity of his Friend's Wife?

BUT I confess it does not become me to launch into invectives; but rather to analyse the particular passages of the Archbishop's Letter, and by that means to prove the absurdity of his Lordship's Commentary, from one end of it to the other.

The beginning of the letter, far from proving that Monsieur de Fenelon had even an idea of Madame de Maintenon's having any scruples, evidently appears to have been written in answer to one of her's, in which, depending on his wisdom and zeal, she had desired his advice upon the proper means to be used for withdrawing Lewis the XIVth from his former

mer dissipation. Every line of the letter in question is sufficient to convince me of this truth; and I have also two additional motives to confirm my opinion. One is, her intire confidence in the Archbishop, and the continual eulogiums she bestows on him through the course of her memoirs. The other is founded on what she says to Mademoiselle d'Aumale, in the cclxxixth letter: "That her fondest attentions were devoted to the correcting of the King's passions."

Lord Chesterfield, who looked on Monsieur de Fenelon as a Tartuffe, and on the Marchioness de Maintenon as a still greater hypocrite, may consider the passage I have quoted, as part of a farce performed by an excellent actress; but as to the jaundiced eye every object appears yellow, so those of dissolute principles are alike ready to suppose the rest of the world as abandoned as themselves. But shall I believe the jaundiced man, when he tells me that the colour of the swan is saffron?

Or

Or take the word of a Libertine, that virtue is merely dissimulation?

I BELIEVE, and therefore will venture to say, that Madame de Maintenon had communicated her views, with regard to the King's reformation, to her director, that he might act in concert with her; and that she submitted the measure she pursued for this great purpose, to his superior prudence. Monsieur de Fenelon seems to think that she proceeds too violently at first, and fears she might by that means defeat the work she had engaged in: He therefore advises, what wisdom itself would have advised, at the first setting out, delicacy and moderation. He recommends it to her not to distress the King by tedious remonstrances, which always tend to disgust and dispirit; but to proceed with gentleness and patience, which generally succeed, and obtain their end. He desires, that the King's heart may be affected by the piety of her conduct, and his eyes opened by the exertion  
of



of her virtues; and that his edification may be the effect of her good works; and my Lord Chesterfield will have it, that Monsieur de Fenelon advised his penitent to prostitute herself for the edification of his Majesty! An extraordinary method, truly, to turn the heart to God! Such Directors abound in the cities of London and Paris.

BUT let us suppose, for a moment, that the Marchioness had expressed some scruples to her Director, and that his letter was meant to solve her doubts, and calm her mind; we must necessarily believe, that her apprehensions were solely for the King, and that she was not the least alarmed upon her own account, with regard to their criminal commerce; she feared not for her own salvation, but that he should offend God, and forfeit his. In effect, had her scruples concerned herself, Monsieur de Fenelon could not have said, "Your zeal for *the King's* salvation ought not, &c." No; he must unavoidably

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have

have said, "The zeal for *your* salvation, &c." This is obvious to every reader, from the first line; and yet it escaped Lord Chesterfield! But let us proceed a little further with these pretended scruples.

I HAVE just proved that the King was the sole object of them. In this case, then, it is to be presumed, that the Marchioness could not be at a loss for objections to the too free propositions of the amorous Monarch. While he spoke of Cupid, she might have talked of Angels, and founded her refusal upon the conscientious fear of his damnation! Is it then possible to conceive so gross an absurdity, and to suppose Madame de Maintenon capable of it!

IN such a situation, the veriest simpleton, the merest idiot, a Nun, marked with the cicatrices of her discipline, who had grown grey within the grate of a Cloister, would not have talked such silly stuff; and yet we are to believe it came from  
the

the lips of a justly celebrated woman, who, without rank or fortune, and in the autumn of her beauty, was raised by her sense and spirit to the confidence of a Prince, who was not himself deficient in either!—Ridiculous! And were even the authentic writers of that era to have affirmed it, I should still find it very difficult to give them credit.

ANOTHER of his Lordship's remarks, which is equally revolting to sense and probity, must, at the first glance, expose him to ridicule. He elevates his brazen front, and in the effusion of a boundless assurance, of which I have seen but few instances, attempts to make Monsieur de Fenelon appear an Impostor, by accusing him of endeavouring to pass for a Saint! And on whom is he to impose himself for such? On his Penitent. And that he may seem to her to be possessed of the very odour of sanctity, he commences his Saintship by an act of the lowest infamy; or rather, to prove the sincerity of

his attachment to virtue, he advises her to abandon her's; and to convince her that his are the dictates of wisdom, he preaches to her to become a Concubine!

LET no one object, that while the Director acted in this manner, he only used address artfully to conciliate the opposite extremes of vice and virtue! A girl of fifteen years old could not have fallen into so gross a snare. The dullest of our Capuchin Friars would have laughed at such a paltry stratagem; and yet Monsieur de Fencelon, we are told, was so ignorantly absurd, as to risk it with Madame de Maintenon! His Lordship pretends that the Archbishop was but slightly acquainted with his Penitent; but he cannot have been so ignorant of her character, as to fancy her weak enough to be caught in such a trap.

I WILL go farther yet, Madam, and allow that the Marchioness either had, or  
 2 affected



affected to have, scruples. Does a concealed marriage prevent the censure of the Public, who gladly lay hold on any opportunity to indulge their malice? No, certainly; to this, even Lord Chesterfield assents. It was therefore natural for her to have scruples; but not such as must proceed from a guilty commerce which never had existed, tho' she might fear that her situation must occasion scandal.

I AGAIN repeat it, that no part of Monsieur de Fenelon's letter gives us room to suppose that he had any idea of scruples, at the same time he wrote it. And yet, from the character that has been given us of Madame de Maintenon, it seems very likely that she might have expressed some doubts to him, relative to her situation. If she was truly devout, as has been said, those doubts were real; if, on the contrary, we credit the idle reports that paint her as an ambitious woman, who aspired to be acknowledged Queen, they were affected. In either case,

I own

l own, it is probable that her scruples might have been a subject for discussion, between her and her Director ; but if ambition, that great spring and mover of the human passions, had been their source, her policy would have helped her to play them off in such a manner as to obtain some advantage from them. She who knew the delicacy of her Director's mind, would have blazoned them forth in the most pompous stile, in hopes he would have enjoined her retreat ; which, by alarming the King's passion, might have produced the effect she wished, and crowned her ambition with a diadem.

BUT whether the Marchioness was sincere or not, in her correspondence with Monsieur de Fenelon ; whether she declared to him that she had scruples, or whether she never expressed any ; far from being able to discover any thing in his letter which can tend to debase his character, all that appears to me from the text, exalts him in my eyes, and  
increases

increases my veneration for him. In this very letter I perceive the advice of a sensible and enlightened friend, joined to the almost parental attention of a wise Guardian. An air of truth and sincerity reigns through the whole, which seems to have been written by the hand of Piety, under the direction of Prudence.

PERFECTLY convinced of Madame de Maintenon's being married, Monsieur de Fenelon proposes the conduct of Sarah to Abraham, as a model for his Penitent's imitation, in her behaviour to the King. And here it is that Lord Chesterfield, inflamed with the rage of criticism, mounts his stilts to acquaint us, in the more dictatorial tone, in what that conduct consisted; and that it occasioned the birth of Isaac. But as it is of as little consequence to know how Isaac came into the world, as how he left it, I shall only stop here to observe the manner in which our noble Critic has explained the example of Sarah. He tells us, that

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to follow the example of *a virtuous wife*, was to become *a prostitute*! Indignation glows on my cheek, when I think of such an interpretation, and that it was so construed by the Earl of Chesterfield! by a Minister so able, so discerning in state affairs, as to be worthy of presiding at the Council-board of England. Yes, I blush for him, when I think that so great a Politician should have been so poor a Scholar.

ABRAHAM feared that the beauty of Sarah, his lawful wife, might be productive of ill consequences to him, as he was going into Egypt with her; he foresaw that the Egyptians would be captivated with her charms, and might probably put him to death if they knew he was her husband; he therefore commanded her to say she was his sister\*. And it was indisputably, in this particular point, that Monsieur de Fenelon

\* Genesis, chap. xii.



prescribed the imitation of Sarah to Madame de Maintenon: " Sarah, the  
 " wife of Abraham, passed for his sister,  
 " in obedience to her husband: You are  
 " the King's wife, but do not pass for  
 " such, in obedience to the King. And  
 " thus you are to be submissive to the  
 " King, as Sarah was to Abraham. Look  
 " upon him as your Lord, by the com-  
 " mand of God." That is to say, obey  
 him, as God has ordained that wives  
 should obey their husbands. " Your  
 " situation," adds the Archbishop, " is  
 " enigmatical;" which is clearly to be  
 understood with regard to her being pri-  
 vately married. " The world is igno-  
 " rant whether you are the wife, or  
 " mistress of the King; and the Public,  
 " who would be amazed, were they as  
 " well informed of this matter as I  
 " am, lose themselves in doubts and  
 " conjectures; but it is the mystery of  
 " God;" which signifies, that God,  
 whose decrees we should unrepiningly  
 adore, has opposed obstacles, to her un-  
 known,

known, which must prevent her being declared Queen.

THIS is, I think, the only construction that can possibly be given to the passages I have quoted ; and I defy the utmost refinement, even subtilty itself, to give them any other, without transgressing the common bounds of reason.

To you, Madam, I appeal, whose judgment is so perfect : but without having recourse to such an elevated capacity as your's, I will venture to abide by the decision of any person who has a grain of understanding and equity. Is the soul of fire, and piercing eye of a Mansfield, necessary to discover Truth, when she stands before us ? Or when she lifts her voice, does it require the thundering eloquence of a Chatham to make her heard ?

I was upon the point of concluding this address, Madam, but find that a material observation had escaped me. If Madame  
de

de Maintenon was not married to Lewis the XIVth why should Monsieur de Fencelon say, that her situation was enigmatical? There can be no mystery in the state of a kept mistress, who is obliged, perhaps with regret, to open her doors every evening to receive her selfish benefactor. Nor is there any thing very obscure or impenetrable in the condition of those fair ones, who can at their toilets create Ministers of State, or supersede a General at the head of an army; at whose feet the ambitious Clergy sigh for an mitre, or the vain Noblesse for an ell and a half of ribbon. Surely there is nothing enigmatical in such a situation---No, we know too well the shameful price they pay for the favour of their Prince!

The Marchioness of Verneuil in France, in the reign of Henry the IVth and the Duchess of Portsmouth in England, during that of Charles the II<sup>d</sup> and many other ladies whom I could name, who lived nearer the present era, passed publick-

ly for what they were.---And I will venture to say, that Monsieur de Fenelon, had he been under a necessity of writing to her, would never have told Madame du Barry, that her situation was in the least *enigmatical*.

This last expression, Madam, throws the strongest light upon the Archbishop's conduct, and renders his candour visible to every unprejudiced eye; but he has furnished me with an additional proof in support of it, by saying to Madame de Maintenon, that "she held the place of Queens." And how could she possibly be elevated to that august rank, if it were not by the sacred ties of marriage?

My Lord Chesterfield, or some other ingenious joker, to shew their wit, might, in an epigram, or in jest, perhaps, say, that no one can fill the place of a Queen better than the mistress of a King. In that case we should sometimes have many queens at once in the same Court, and few  
 3 are



are the Kingdoms that would not abound in majesty.

BUT the seriousness of the subject on which I am engaged, by no means sympathizes with such trifling pleasantries.--- The love of justice, which first engaged me to enter upon the defence of an injured character, obliges me, before I conclude, to take a view of Monsieur de Fenelon's disgrace; or rather, to recal to your remembrance, Madam, the cause which occasioned it. The sincerity of his attachment to truth, which was dearer to him than any other object, first injured him in the affection of his Royal Master, who not being at all times disposed to hear it, sent his too zealous monitor to die in exile. And could this man, who was banished from the Court of Lewis the XIVth for his virtue, be capable of striving to become great by an act of the lowest meanness? He who led princes in the real paths of honour, could he himself be capable of straying into the road of infamy?

Or,

Or, could he who ventured to oppose his King, in defence of his duty, sacrifice his duty and his King, by a conduct too atrocious for the lowest of mankind?

Judge with your usual candour, Madam, and you will readily allow that Lord Chesterfield, whether being grossly mistaken, or from a spirit of malevolence and injustice, has attempted to load with infamy the memory of a man, to whom he should rather have erected altars; but the eulogium of Monsieur de Fenelon is reserved for a pen superior to mine, and it is not my province to criticise Lord Chesterfield's opinions, any further than the present subject seems to require.

I have the Honour to be,

With the highest respect,

MADAM, Yours, &c.

